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A Walk Along the Turquoise Path Historical Sites, Famous Stories are Spotlighthed

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Downtown Tucson is brimming with historical sites and famous stories. Soon it will have a walking trail to show much of it off.

Beginning in mid-December, Downtown will have a walking trail modeled after Boston's famous Freedom Trail to guide residents and visitors around 23 of the city's most significant historical landmarks.

The 23 sites are located in a loop around Downtown, from the Presidio Wall south to Carrillo Elementary School, then northeast to the Hotel Congress and northwest to finish at the Telles Block, which is now Old Town Artisans.

Each site will be marked along the trail, and sites that don't currently have plaques will soon get them.

The sites will be connected by a turquoise-colored line that is being painted on the sidewalk for most of the length of the trail, said Gayle Hartmann, president of the Presidio Trust for Historic Preservation and one of the two women largely responsible for making the trail a reality.

"We are copying the Freedom Trail," Hartmann said, of the trail that connects 16 historic sites between Boston Common and the Bunker Hill Monument in Charlestown by a red line painted on the sidewalk. "We aren't pretending that we are original."

Hartmann said the purpose of the trail is to encourage more use of Downtown, increase patronage of the businesses in the city's center, show off Tucson's rich history and simply provide the opportunity for a nice walk. The entire walk takes about two hours, she said.

While the stops on Tucson's new trail aren't as historic as Boston's, it has its own Tucson charm, said Marjorie Cunningham, a Tucson lawyer who was also instrumental setting up the walking tour.

She rattled off some of Tucson's unique history, including John Dillinger's capture at the Hotel Congress, Wyatt Earp shooting his brother's killer along the railroad tracks and the story of El Tiradito, the wishing shrine.

"It's not as (historically) significant as Boston's, but we have better weather," Cunningham said.

Cunningham said a brochure marking the trail's path and explaining its 23 sites and their significance will be ready by Dec. 15 at the Metropolitan Tucson Convention and Visitors Bureau, 100 S. Church Ave., and also at hotels and restaurants.

"It seems to me that it is something that should have been done a long time ago, so people can understand what they're looking at," Hartmann said.

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